

## Education and Culture Committee

### Scotland's Educational and Cultural Future

#### Professor Bill Sweeney

*N.B. These responses are made in my personal capacity and do not represent the official positions of the University of Glasgow*

#### **THEME 1: FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

- How current immigration policies impact on Scottish universities' and colleges' ability to attract and retain international students;

I do not have an overall, data-led response to this question, but I do have experience of the beneficial effect of allowing talented graduates to stay on working in Scotland in the music sector and of the administrative burden incurred for institutions when, for example, an international student wishes to alter the pattern of their studies e.g. to split studies over a longer overall time period, or to opt for a different degree-level.

- The social, cultural and financial contribution made by international students;

The benefits of the social and cultural impact of international students is difficult to quantify, but it is immediately obvious to all who are engaged in teaching, particularly in group, co-operative situations – seminars and workshops - that differing cultural perspectives enliven and enrich the educational experience.

- Scottish universities' access to UK research funding;
- How a new funding formula for Scotland's contribution to the Research Councils could work in practice;
- Whether, in the event of Scotland becoming an independent country, research funding from other sources would be likely to alter significantly.

In the event of new arrangements for Research Funding, I would hope that the present rather crude ranking of research according to, "national", "international" and "world-leading" could be either a) abandoned or b) adjusted to reflect the realities of Scottish nationhood. The present, rather metro-centric approach places relatively low value on research that is highly significant in terms of the "local" culture.

#### **THEME 3: BROADCASTING AND CULTURE**

- The practical, legislative, technical and financial arrangements that would be required to establish an SBS;

In the Arts, relationships with copyright societies and with Trades Unions which manage performers' copyright through trade agreements with broadcasters are significant – these would have to be managed sensitively and smoothly to avoid interruptions to new productions and dissemination of existing "product". It will also be important to retain existing expertise and to nurture the new: this will be extremely

difficult if e.g. conditions of employment and legal rights were to be undermined.

How broadcasting would be regulated in the event of Scotland becoming an independent country;

I would hope that any new regulatory regime would place qualitative, cultural evaluations at the heart of its philosophy and preserve the ethos of public service broadcasting, protecting it from the hegemonic idea that the object of broadcasters is to generate private wealth.

The current capacity of Scottish producers, and whether any planning and investment would be required to increase opportunities for this sector.

Recent decades have seen commercial broadcasters reduce their own production capacity and responsibility for technical training. There seems to be plenty of overall capacity, but it is somewhat atomised and relies on an army of aspirant - and largely unpaid - interns to provide the new generation of producers. A new twist on the 'labour army in reserve'. All broadcasters must take some responsibility for training and aspire to be more than commissioners and publishers of "product".

The benefits that could derive to Scotland if its cultural and creative output were promoted more widely;

There is certainly potential in connecting Scottish culture more directly with the international scene without the intervening filter of metro-centrism: both for its impact and in terms of growth through critical engagement and reflection. Success depends on the qualities and perspectives of the individuals charged with funding, production and dissemination and on the effectiveness of public oversight and review.

How new powers over the economy and an overseas diplomatic and trade network could encourage the Scottish cultural and creative sectors;

Our view of our own culture is still over-influenced by the effects of being a smaller neighbour: distinctiveness is too often seen either as an exotic marketing tool or as being in opposition to modernism. Our cultural activities will grow in extent and progress in terms of developing artistic depth as well as breadth if new forms of engagement with other cultures can be encouraged.

How Scottish cultural bodies currently work together with their counterpart bodies in the rest of the UK, and whether this relationship may change;

As noted, the role of copyright societies and trades unions will have to be recognised and new organisational forms, or forms of co-operation will have to be devised. This will inevitably be a long drawn out process and a new Scottish government will have to ensure that decisions are not made in conditions of crisis (e.g. the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is a much too important - and historical - component of our musical culture to be undermined by a "higher-level" disagreement about the allocation of assets and liabilities).

It is also important that Scottish cultural institutions are not encouraged to "grow their business" by blatant undercutting of current UK providers - a race for the bottom

would have fairly swift impact on the quality of cultural production and life.

- The likely future role for UK bodies that have some cultural or creative function in Scotland.

As already noted there are membership organisations (MU, Actors' Equity, BASCA, PRS, MCPS and others) which have significant numbers of members in Scotland. Funding from Foundations (Hamlyn, Vaughan-Williams Trust etc) may be affected, although there will be a huge variety of terms of bequest etc, so some may be possible as before. Business funding for the arts and culture is already notoriously capricious (although always welcome and often generous) and this sector is likely to persist for all of the reasons that pertain at the moment.

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